

PATHWAYS TO PHILOSOPHY E

Moral Philosophy 'Reasons, values and conduct'

Essay Question 3

Why must others count in my deliberations?

Introduction

There are many reasons that have been raised as to why others (1) must count in my deliberations (2). The many reasons come from different views of morality and the world. There are reasons for the rationalist, solipsist, Kantian and those that accept a two-world view of a personal world married to wider world involving others.

The question arises "Is it possible to deliberate without considering others?" If so then the element of compulsion in the word "must" does not apply.

Rationalist view

To make a rational deliberation I must consider the environment. In deliberating as what to do tomorrow I have to consider, for example the weather, it is not rational to decide to go out for a drive if snow has blocked the driveway. The biggest impact on me and my deliberations, which must be considered, is other humans. Rationally I assume they exist and affect me as I affect them. If I don't go to work then my boss may fire me. If I just ignore others in my deliberations then my decision is not rational.

Natural sympathy for others

It is built into my DNA I have a natural sympathy for other humans or even other sentient animals. When I see another suffering pain I feel at least some of that pain as I have felt pain myself. The closer I am to the other the more significant is this sympathy. I feel sorry for the starving children in Africa and may even give some money to the United Nations Children's fund but I am more concerned and more active concerning the others in my immediate family.

Hume in proposing his theory of natural sympathy (3) explains why we allow others to count in our deliberations but not why we must do so. My compulsion comes from my in built nature, the human species that has evolved to make me what I am today.

The disinterested view

In the disinterested view the world as seen from an impersonal detached viewpoint is seen as a community of people. These people are what matters from this viewpoint so must be considered in my deliberations. The key question here is how can we be so detached especially from those emotionally close to us.

Kantian View

Kant stated that people should be treated as ends in themselves and not means to an end or obstacle to overcome. In a world that includes others then Kant requires others to be treated with a great deal of respect, which will require being counted in my deliberations. If own does not consider others in one's deliberations then one is not considering them with the respect Kant requires. To follow the Kantian view we must consider

others. This aspect of Kant's view make sense to me in promoting a better world particularly as I see in everyday life how transgressing this view has the opposite effect.

Solipsist view

As a solipsist I am the only mind in the world but I have a rational mind. The world (my world) has things in it like the weather and the others. I have to consider all these factors in my deliberations. It is not that the others really matter to me any more than the snow on my front driveway but I have to consider them to make a rational decision.

On the other hand I find solipsism a difficult construct to accept. How did I get here? What is the total picture? Occam's razor quickly rejects such a complicated idea in favor of the commonsense view of the world in which I am one amongst many. In rejecting solipsism I accept that there are others that must count in my deliberations.

Two-world view

In the two-world view others exist in the larger world and may correct my judgment when I make errors. These errors, for example, could be taking me down a path that will not lead to my objective. I still have my personal view of the world and my own values but the values of others are also significant to me as part of the larger world. I must therefore consider others because of their involvement with me as possible correctors of my judgment and the interplay of their values and my own.

Egoist view

The Egoist view (4) states that people are motivated by their own interests and desires, and cannot be described otherwise. In the real world however ones' own interests and desires are very much tied up with those of others. It is very difficult if not impossible to consider one's interests in isolation from others.

Golden rule view

All religions have some version of the Golden rule "treat others as you would prefer to be treated yourself" We would all like to be considered. To be ignored and forgotten by all those around us would be a dreadful fate. This in turn is another reason why we must consider others in our deliberations. Rejection of this consideration is rejecting a core tenet of these religions and rejecting these religions.

Conclusions

Others must count in my deliberations.

No sane person can cut himself off so totally from the rest of humanity that others don't count at all in their deliberations. Even when considering my own values one of these values itself includes the requirement that others exist and matter.

Deliberation without considering others is not possible because others affect every aspect of one's life. No Man is an island. I might deliberate on whether to eat a chocolate or shortbread biscuit (both in front of me in the biscuit barrel) and think this does not involve others. But it does! Others made these biscuits and others will be affected by the removal of the biscuits. The definition of deliberations (2) is relevant here as a *long and careful consideration* rather than a quick guess or thought.

We must consider others in our deliberations but not all others and not all others equally. Others such as one's immediate family are considered to a greater extent because of the greater natural sympathy. Lack of factual information and poor analysis rather than ignoring others is what leads me to come to conclusions not in my interest and not in the interest of others.

To attempt to deliberate without considering others will lead to an irrational deliberation.

Notes

- Other *Someone that is distinct or separate from oneself* Oxford English Dictionary
- Deliberations *Long and careful consideration or discussion* Oxford English Dictionary
- David Hume *Treatise of Human Nature* 1739
- Egoism *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*